CLAIMS

1.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment comprising:

selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments;

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messenger application;

receiving the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieving the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

2.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including determining whether the transmitting instant messaging application is an eligible instant messaging application.

3.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including determining whether the selected instant messaging environment corresponding to the transmitted instant messaging environment identifier is stored on the receiving instant messaging application.

4.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including determining whether the selected instant messaging environment corresponding to the transmitted instant messaging environment identifier has expired.

5.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including downloading the selected instant messaging environment from a source that stores the instant messaging environment.

6.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment identifier is transmitted with an instant message.

7. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies a background for a history window.

8. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies an animation for a history window.

9. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies functions that execute when certain words are included in a message.

10. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies functions that execute when certain combinations of words are included in a message.

11. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment specifies functions that execute when certain emoticons are included in a message.

12. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment includes a link.

13. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment includes a watermark.

14. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 wherein the instant messaging environment redefines user interface commands.

15. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including tracking whenever an instant messaging environment identifier is sent.

16. A method of sharing an instant messaging environment as recited in claim 1 further including tracking when a certain function contained in an instant messaging environment is executed.

17. A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application comprising:

receiving the user interface command; and

processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment.

18.   A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment includes accessing a version of the user interface command that is redefined by the instant messaging environment.

19.   A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment includes executing instructions specified by the instant messaging environment and then executing the user interface command.

20.   A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein the user interface command appends text to a history window and wherein the predetermined instant messaging environment changes the manner in which the text appears in the history window.

21.   A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein the user interface command is processed by a browser window.

22.   A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 17 wherein the user interface command is processed by a browser window.

23.   A method of processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application as recited in claim 22 wherein the user interface command is contained in hidden frame.

24.   A computer program product for sharing an instant messaging environment, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments;

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messenger application;

receiving the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant

5   messenger application;

retrieving the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

10   25.   A system for sharing an instant messaging environment comprising:

a first instant messaging application configured to:

select the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments; and

transmit an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the

15   selected instant messaging environment; and

a second instant messaging application configured to:

receive the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application; and

retrieve the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the

20   instant messaging environment identifier;

activate the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

26.   A method of sharing an instant messaging environment comprising:

selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant

25   messaging environments; and

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messenger application wherein the receiving instant messaging application is configured to:

receive the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieve the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

5   activate the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

27.   A computer program product for sharing an instant messaging environment, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

10   selecting the instant messaging environment from a set of stored instant messaging environments; and

transmitting an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment from a transmitting instant messaging application to a receiving instant messenger application wherein the receiving instant messaging

15   application is configured to:

receive the instant messaging environment identifier at the receiving instant messenger application;

retrieve the stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

20   activate the instant messaging environment in the receiving instant messaging application.

28.   A system for sharing an instant messaging environment comprising:

a memory configured to store a set of instant messaging environments;

a processor configured to select the instant messaging environment from the set of

25   stored instant messaging environments; and

an interface configured to transmit an instant messaging environment identifier corresponding to the selected instant messaging environment.

29.   A method of implementing an instant messaging environment comprising:

receiving an instant messaging environment identifier at a receiving instant

30   messenger application;

retrieving a stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment.

30.   A computer program product for implementing an instant messaging environment, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

retrieving a stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

activating the instant messaging environment.

31.   A system for implementing an instant messaging environment comprising:

an interface configured to receive an instant messaging environment identifier at a receiving instant messenger application;

a memory configured to retrieve a stored instant messaging environment corresponding to the instant messaging environment identifier; and

a processor configured to activate the instant messaging environment.

32.   A computer program product for processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

receiving the user interface command; and

processing the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment.

33.   A system for processing a user interface command in an instant messaging application comprising:

an interface configured to receive the user interface command; and

a processor configured to process the user interface command in a manner specified by a predetermined instant messaging environment.